THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, 1917–2017: THE MYTHOLOGY AND REALITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

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THE THREE MAIN WESTERN REVOLUTIONS AND THEIR CENSUSES*

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This article considers national censuses in the US, France, and Russia based on new principles and held after their respective revolutions. The authors aim to find out to what extent the authorities succeeded in following enumeration procedures based on international regulations. It is demonstrated that a census is a dialectical process involving the state and the population, requiring reciprocal trust. France had no experience of organising censuses with the exception of those in the country's American colonies. The gentry wanted to keep control over their lands and would not share information about their population with the central authorities. In post-revolutionary France, the census held during the Jacobin terror was not entirely successful, with the state bureaucracy not being strong enough to organise a coherent census and different revolutionary committees taking uncoordinated measures to register the population. The US, however, had had a number of censuses organised by the British prior to the War of Independence. The first census in the United States was held in 1790 in compliance with the Constitution. As a result, the US has held censuses at decadal intervals ever since, but it faced a number of problems for a considerable amount of time, especially concerning the registering of racial minorities. Russia was at an advantage in that respect since it held the first all-Russian census in

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1897 in addition to local censuses and census-like tax revisions. The first all-Soviet census organised after the Revolution and Civil War in 1926 was successful, especially among the ethnic minorities in the polar parts of the country. However, the 1937 census became part of repression measures, with detrimental consequences for the census and census takers alike. The US and Soviet censuses census organised after their respective revolutions were successful: in the former, the census created enthusiasm because it was regarded as an instrument to make the new democracy work, while in the Soviet Union of the 1920s, the census was perceived as a prerequisite for the social and economic modernisation of the new state.

Keywords: Revolutions; population censuses; Russian Revolution; 1790 census of the US; French censuses; 1926 census of the Soviet Union.

Рассмотрены всеобщие национальные переписи населения в США, Франции и России, проведенные после окончания революций, повлекших кардинальные изменения в обществе, и организованные по новым принципам. Авторы исследуют вопрос о том, в какой степени каждой из них удалось провести регистрацию населения в соответствии с новыми международными правилами. Показано, что перепись населения – диалектический процесс, требующий доверия и взаимодействия между властями и населением. Во Франции не было опыта организации переписей, за исключением тех, что были осуществлены в их американских колониях. Дворяне стремились сохранить полный контроль в своих землях и не желали делиться информацией о населении с центральной властью. Не вполне удалась послереволюционная перепись населения во Франции, проведенная в условиях террора якобинцев. Государственная бюрократия была слишком слаба, и многочисленные революционные комитеты проводили нескоординированные действия по регистрации населения. В США к началу Войны за независимость прошло несколько переписей, организованных британцами. Первая перепись здесь была проведена в 1790 г., через несколько лет после окончания войны, в соответствии с решением, записанным в Конституции. С тех пор переписи населения в стране проходят регулярно с десятилетним интервалом, однако проблемы качества их проведения сохранялись достаточно долго, особенно в части регистрации расовых меньшинств. Россия имела явное преимущество, обладая опытом проведения Первой общероссийской переписи 1897 г., а до нее – организации городских переписей и ревизий населения. Первая перепись населения в Советском Союзе, проведенная после окончания революции и Гражданской войны в 1926 г., была вполне успешной, особенно Приполярная перепись этнических меньшинств в северных районах страны. Однако следующая за ней Всесоюзная перепись 1937 г. стала частью репрессивной политики, повлекшей пагубные последствия как для ее результатов, так и для переписчиков. Послереволюционные переписи населения в США и Советском Союзе были вполне успешными. В США ее приняли с большим энтузиазмом как необходимый инструмент утверждавшейся демократии, а в Советском Союзе – как предпосылку социально-экономической модернизации нового государства.

Ключевые слова: революции; переписи населения; Русская революция; перепись населения США 1790 г.; переписи населения во Франции; Всесоюзная перепись населения 1926 г.

Most historians will agree that the most significant revolutions in the Western Hemisphere have been the American, the French, and the Russian. Among their far-reaching consequences was the introduction of population censuses taken with new procedures that aimed to provide more accurate population statistics. The US from 1790, France from the 1790s, and Russia from 1920 used different methods, however, and the scope and accuracy of the enumerations in each of the three nations differed as well. The very definition of a census demands that the whole territory should be included and that the population should be counted on a specific census day in order to avoid under-enumeration and the repeated listing of migrants [Goyer, Draaijer]. This article highlights the factors that decided the extent to which enumerators in the US, France, and Russia were able to live up to such strict demands.

The demands were the strictest in the Soviet Union, not only because by the 20th century the contents of a population census were much more complex and the questionnaires and instructions more advanced than in the late 18th century. The Soviet census had to serve as a basic instrument for the planned economy, not only enumerating the population, but also mapping in as great detail as possible the resources available for building a centralized socialist economy. Since the US census was primarily an instrument for deciding suffrage and distributing delegates to Congress, it could simply count adult men – women got the full right to vote in 1920. In France, the census got off to a difficult start when different revolutionary committees were unable to coordinate their enumeration efforts.

Sociologists recently presented a theory about population censuses as dialectical interplay between the state and the population in order to explain the variation in the scope, contents, and methodology of censuses [Emigh, Riley and Ahmed, 2015a; Emigh, Riley and Ahmed, 2015b]. The theory's pivotal point is that the power of the central state relative to regional leaders and pressure groups decides to what degree statisticians as agents of the state were able to carry out any national enumeration. In none of the three post-revolutionary states was it obvious that censuses could be taken reasonably quickly. The US managed to create a simple, numeric census in 1790, seven years after the end of the Revolutionary War and only three years after the Constitutional Assembly ratified census taking. After a similar length of time, the Bolsheviks had to acknowledge that war made their 1920 census premature and that it would only cover parts of the Soviet Union. Several revolutionary committees organized censuses in France, but none came to cover the whole nation, and most of the census manuscripts ended up as heating material.

Of the three revolutionary states, the French had the least experience with census taking. In the 18th century, several theoretical attempts were made to assess the number of inhabitants based on vital rates and experimental multiplication factors. The exception was the censuses arranged in French Canada in the 17th century. Regional opposition against providing Paris with census numbers blocked all attempts by state representatives to arrange national

enumerations. However, "suddenly in 1789 the word 'impossible' stopped being French for census taking" [Dupaquier J., Dupaquier M., p. 292]. The US, in contrast, had extensive experience, since the British arranged enumerations in most of its American colonies before the War of Independence, despite the House of Lords blocking similar counting in Britain itself.

Russian administrators had experience not only from the 1897 census, which covered the whole empire except Finland, but also from censuses run in many of its cities in the 1870s and 1880s and the *Revizkie Skazkie* (census-like tax revisions), of which the tenth and last was organized in 1858. The 1905 Russian Revolution, World War I, the 1917 revolutions, civil war, and foreign intervention led to the postponement of the second all-Russian census.

The Independent United States and their censuses

As principal members of the Constitutional Assembly, Congress leader James Madison and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson were well aware of the importance of census taking for the political functioning of their new American republic. On 14 February 1790, the former wrote to the latter: "A Bill for taking a census has passed the House of Representatives, and is with the Senate" [Madison]. Madison phrased the need for a headcount in this manner: "Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct" [Constitution of the US, 1787, article 1, section 2]. Congress passed its first bill about census taking in 1790 and has continued the practice every decade since. The scope and contents of the US census has varied, but some form of enumeration is mandatory according to the Constitution. Already from the start, some politicians wanted to drop re-enumeration in order to cut expenses or because they were satisfied with the existing calculation of voters and delegates. But this would be unconstitutional.

Jefferson continued monitoring the census procedures and results, and in August 1791 noted that nearly all states had returned them. He distinguished between empirical and estimated results for the many places still missing information: "the result, which as far as founded on actual returns is written in black ink, and the numbers not actually returned, yet pretty well known, are written in red ink. Making a very small allowance for omissions, we are upwards of four millions; and we know in fact that the omissions have been very great" [Jefferson]. This is but one example of how learned men used census results in their letters and publications, for instance in state histories – there was not even a temporary census office to compute aggregates. However, these statistics included only people who lived inside the initially recognized thirteen states, since other territories elected no representatives to national offices yet. This was to change rapidly: before the next census in 1800, Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee were accepted into the Union and arranged census taking at the turn of the new century.

The US Congress distributes representatives among the states based on census figures describing the electorate. In March 1792, they passed a bill with a distribution that many southerners felt favoured the northern states. President Washington discussed the matter with his government, where Jefferson and Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton disagreed as usual. Jefferson suggested a more southern-friendly method of distributing delegates. Washington vetoed the bill, the first presidential veto ever. Congress had to adopt an apportionment system along Jefferson's guidelines [Anderson, p. 16]. With all the checks and balances of Jeffersonian democracy, there is always a danger that the census-based US representative democracy might be politically impotent. By mid-1792, however, central observers could note with satisfaction that the world's first democracy based on census taking actually functioned, despite under-enumerations and other shortcomings. In addition to the British pre-revolutionary censuses, it helped that during the Revolution individual colonies had created census-like tax lists in 1776 or lists to check which citizens failed to sign the 1778 Oath of Fidelity [Federal Census Schedule]. The government's attempt from 1798 to levy a tax on slaves, housing, and land failed, and made little impact on census methodology [Anderson, p. 17]. With British all-union taxation as the main controversial issue before the War of Independence, it should not surprise us that the collection of federal taxes was problematic.

President Jefferson and others campaigned to include more details in the 1800 census. Even if built on the earlier model, the 1800 census introduced smaller administrative divisions and age distributions for whites, while only gross aggregates represented the Indian and slave populations. Congress ignored Jefferson's pleas for occupational and economic data collection, likely because it could be used for taxation. It gave the marshals nine months during which to assemble, verify, and aggregate the census returns, an interval Congress tried unsuccessfully to shorten in 1810. From each of these censuses, Congress published one volume of statistics reporting that the population had grown to 7.2 million inhabitants in 1810. They could proudly ascertain that US population numbers grew faster than the English, inspiring hopes that they would eventually overtake their former rulers. One reason for the growth was that the revolution in the US was a "Revolutionary War", which ended with a peaceful period from 1783. This revolution is also known as the American War of Independence during which they got rid of the British colonizers with French help: from the standpoint of the census, this seems a more relevant concept. By census-time in 1790, the US authorities had full control over the territory, and most war damage had been repaired. It initiated a long period of regular census taking: the US is the only country in the world which has taken censuses at regular, decadal intervals since 1790, although with severe under-enumeration problems. This was very different from France, where the attack on the Bastille on 14 July 1789 started more than two decades of unrest and wars.

The Great French Revolution and population census

The revolutionaries needed a census for traditional reasons like taxation and military conscription, but they also had political motives, specifically the identification of suspected counter-revolutionaries and monitoring the progress of the revolution. In a few years, the records should make obvious to everyone "the advantages of a free government and the good that we have done" [Dupaquier J., Dupaquier M., p. 292]. There was no lack of political will in this respect. Revolutionary committees passed no less than four decrees about census taking from 1789 to the summer of 1791. They repealed orders sent to the municipalities in December 1789 in the following January because the enumerations could not be completed in time for the elections. The decree was reinstated in late June 1790, when two other revolutionary committees ordered enumerations, one by district, canton, and municipality, the other a listing of tax classes by commune and the number of hearths. Orders were given by le Comité de Division, le Comité de Constitution, le Comité de Mendicité (begging), and le Comité de Contribution: later, the Ministries of Finances, the Interior, and Public Instruction also did this.

The office for vital statistics established in 1786 would normally have carried out the central compilation of census aggregates, but this agency was too weak to act during the turmoil of the revolution, and the revolutionaries did not prioritize the establishment of a real, central statistical bureau. Thus, the strong will of Jacobin politicians was moderated by the state's lack of administrative leverage. Therefore, the masses of data sent to Paris from the localities could not be turned into statistical information, even if some aggregates were produced on the local and regional levels and published from 1792 to 1794 [Dupaquier J., Dupaquier M., p. 292]. The piles of paper were stored conscientiously for a while, and some of it has survived in the archives. Much of it ended up heating stoves or as cardboard, however.

The need for administrative coordination became obvious during the rule of the Directory from November 1795 to November 1799. Still, it was not until August 1798 that Minister Francois Neufchâteau (1750–1828) organized the "Bureau du Nord" in his Department of the Interior: this was charged with all census taking upon the establishment of the rule of the Consulate in 1799. Jean-Antoine Chaptal (1756–1832) became Minister of the Interior in the autumn of 1800. Chaptal, who is more famous for introducing the metric system, followed up the preparations for a general population count, which had been ordered in a circular of 16 May 1800. The Department required the mayors in all French municipalities to establish an enumeration of the population divided by married men, widowers, married women, widows, boys, girls, and the military. Otherwise, the instructions sent out were scanty in the extreme: supposedly, de jure, numeric census enumeration should be applied. Many mayors contented themselves with submitting rough numbers, which generally underesti-

mated the population. Others were more accurate, basing their aggregates either on nominative census lists or population registers existing in some localities. Chaptal and his staff had serious doubts about the correctness of the 1801 census, thus organizing a special enumeration in 1802. Therefore, it may be reasonable to question whether it is fair to call the enumeration in 1801 the first real census in France [Dupaquier J., Dupaquier M., p. 292]. As late as 1975, French demographers published a reconstruction of five-year French population totals for the period 1740 to 1860 based on mortality statistics. The authors are probably right that emigration and immigration were limited during this period, since their estimates correspond well with the censuses from 1806 onwards. The 1801 census, however, is deemed to have underestimated the population of France by 0.9 million people, or three percent [Henry, Blayo]. Le Bureau de Statistique published a summary of the statistical results in 1806.

In addition to the general weaknesses of the administrative apparatus after the Revolution, disagreement among leading French 'statisticians' helps explain the somewhat chaotic census taking. Only a couple of weeks after Chaptal became Minister of the Interior in November 1800, he appointed Alexandre de Ferrière as head of the newly reorganized "bureau de statistique". De Ferrière interspersed his administrative duties with the writing of comedies. He adhered to the German school of descriptive rather than quantitative statistics, typically writing: "We must not fool ourselves, rigorous precision and mathematical exactitude are impossible" [Desrosières, p. 47]. De Ferrière found it more important to edit, publish, and comment upon the memoires of administrative prefects in *l'Analise de la statistique generale* than to administer and publish aggregates from the 1801 census returns. This heyday of non-quantitative statistics ended after Jean-Baptiste de Nompère de Champagny (1756–1834) became Minister of the Interior in 1804 and stopped the publication of memoires. This moderate politician, experienced administrator, and ambassador wanted practical results from his statistical bureau, most notably municipal overviews of the population by domicile based on nominative lists [Dupaquier J., Dupaquier M., p. 292]. However, no results from the new census which the statistical bureau attempted to undertake in 1804 have ever been published.

Now the time was ripe for the actuary and mathematician Emmanuel du Villard de Durand (1755–1832) to repeat his harsh criticism of the statistical bureau's publications, including its elementary errors in calculation. De Ferrière's attempt to reply with a jest was in vain: "A more exact estimate of the weight of vegetable production in France will not add a single piece of cabbage to the gardens". Du Villard made no secret of his ambitions to replace the director of the Bureau where he was already employed. Champagny appointed him as vice director three days after he received the critical letter. De Ferriére soon stepped down, and du Villard formulated a program for the calculation of precise quantitative statistics, wanting the Bureau's employees to become scientists rather than archivists [Desrosières, p. 48]. They should discuss and verify critically the figures

received from other authorities, and analyse the relationship between the various aggregates about the population. Du Villard went on to give advice about the next census, due in 1806. This was still the responsibility of the Bureau du Nord, and intradepartmental intrigues may explain why du Villard remained second in command by the appointment of Charles Ètienne Coquebert de Montbret (1751–1831) as director of a once more reorganized "Bureau d'administration génerale de la statistique". He came from a position as customs director on the Rhine and was an experienced mining engineer. The Bureau du Nord administered their second census, which was due five years after the rather unsuccessful 1801 census. The 1806 census is without doubt the most accurate from the revolutionary and Napoleonic period, counting the legal (*de jure*) rather than the *de facto* (present) population [Dupaquier J., Dupaquier M., p. 292].

The 1917 Revolution and population censuses

After a successful start in population registration during the all-Russian census in 1897, there was a break due to the first Russian Revolution in 1905, followed by yearlong mutinies that made the next census impossible. The economic hardships and food crises after Russia entered World War I required urgent information about population and supplies, and desperate attempts were made by several Russian municipalities to register its population in order to arrange efficient food supply. There were the all-Russian agricultural census of 1916 and all-Russian urban census of 1917 [Гапоненко, Кабузан]. On census day in Ekaterinburg (15 January 1917), the city authorities addressed the citizens in the local newspaper in order to explain the main purpose of the enumeration: the census was designed to solve the food crises, so they needed to know the size of the population. They also planned to monitor the need for fuel, the number of disabled citizens, persons with education and professional skills, etc. The authorities warned about gossip that the confiscation of food would follow the census, and called on people to trust and help the census takers.

It is not surprising that the revolutionary Bolsheviks attempted to take a census as soon as 1920: it included questions about agricultural production, so it was important for the planned economy. In his publications, Lenin had used aggregates from the 1897 census to group the towns in the European part of Russia, and he helped the census effort in 1920 by allocating rationed paper for printing census questionnaires. Lenin's quest for precise information was something the authorities would point to repeatedly in order to motivate people to participate in the censuses. Allegedly, on Lenin's orders, the question about religion from 1897 was replaced by questions about nationality (*natcional'nost'*). The 1920 census effort failed, however, due to lack of resources: in any case, it could never have covered the whole territory due to foreign interventions and the civil war, which was still raging. About 28 percent of the total population was excluded due to severe under-enumeration in provinces like Belorussia, the Crimea, the Volga,

Transcaucasia, Turkestan, Khiva, Bukhara, the Far East, and regional parts of Ukraine and Siberia. Thus, the published aggregates cover only parts of the USSR. In 1923, an urban census along the same lines was conducted in towns and other densely populated places [Schwartz].

In charge of the difficult task of collecting statistical information during the turbulent decade from 1917 to 1926 was Pavel Il'itch Popov, born in Irkutsk in 1872. He graduated from the teachers' high school (siminaria) and worked two years as a teacher in Ust'-Ude before going west to study in St Petersburg, where he was arrested in 1896 for links to the Social Democratic Party. After a year in prison, he was exiled to Ufa gubernia, working as a statistician there and in a number of other Russian cities. He studied agronomy in Berlin for a couple of years: when he returned after the Revolution in 1905, he became a statistician with the city administration in St Petersburg while working in parallel on the agricultural statistics of Ukraine. He also obtained detailed knowledge of the Russian Empire by being employed at statistical offices as assistant and, later, as head of statistics in several cities (Samara, Smolensk, Vologda, Khar'kov, and Tula) from 1900. Due to his solid scholarly background, the national congress of statisticians in 1915 elected Popov as secretary general before he took part in the all-Russian agricultural census of 1916. The provisional government appointed him director of the Statistical Bureau in March 1917.

It likely helped Popov's career that he knew Lenin personally from meeting him first in Ufa, where the Bolshevik leader came to visit his wife when returning from Siberian exile, and later in Finland in 1905. In addition, other revolutionary acquaintances such as People's Commissar and statistician Aleksandr Tsiouroupa most likely recommended his continued directorship of the reorganized Directorate of Statistics after the Bolsheviks took power. He defended the independence of statistical expertise in conflicts with other agencies and was not afraid of directly opposing political pressure from such high-ranking politicians as Zinoviev, Bukharin and Stalin, or protesting when he found that they had misused statistical results. The result was his eviction from the post as director of Soviet statistics – the Bolsheviks obviously wanted the primacy of political over scholarly criteria when constructing statistical aggregates. This brought an end to his frequent travelling and participation in international statistical conferences. Popov was degraded to the post of director of agriculture in Gosplan, a post he kept until 1948, two years before he died [Blum, Mespoulet, 18–19].

The census taken in 1926 was the most reliable of the early Soviet censuses, and with the smallest amount of under-enumeration. The dominance of the tsarist regime and the Orthodox Church had ended, so people dared to answer census questions about language or ethnicity. The Bolshevik authorities were in charge of the entirety of the USSR's territory: they were liberal with respect to the right of national groups to express their own culture and the collectivization of agriculture had not started. Therefore, there is reason to put faith in the information about "nationality" which the 1926 census asked for in addition to mother tongue. The *narodnost'*

concept can today be translated as 'nationality' or 'ethnicity', depending on what part of the USSR and which ethnic groups we consider. For instance, Russians or Uzbeks were major ethnic groups, forming the majority population of two republics: they could alternatively be classified as nationalities (*national'nost'*). Other groups, such as the Lopari (contemporary Sami) or the Ostiaks (contemporary Khanty), were minorities inside republics with other majorities. In this case, we must rather translate *narodnost'* as ethnicity. People had to answer this census question by self-identification, and cultural aspects rather than ancestry or biological background were what was sought. Since the census taker would usually interview the male head of household, the guideline to report maternal ethnicity for children in mixed marriage families was not easy to follow. Nationality in the sense of *citizenship* was not a relevant criterion – people were citizens of the Soviet Union.

The 1926 all-union census resulted in the publication of 55 volumes with printed statistical aggregates consisting of two main series organized by republic. In the first series, the focus was on the national or ethnic composition of the republics, provinces, and regions, which was in accordance with the efforts of the Bolshevik Party to organize the republics as semi-independent nations. The occupational structure of the country was equally important, since the authorities wanted to map the productive forces available for building the USSR as well as to identify social segments that could threaten the new worker state's stability. In the Russian parts of the Union, nearly two thirds of the enumerators were statisticians, students, or teachers, while in the Central Asian parts just above one third belonged to these categories [Schwartz]. Many census takers were students educated in Moscow and other cities, but they often lacked detailed knowledge of local languages, customs, and topography. In certain districts, for example in Ufa, they were unwelcome, and local leaders had to escort them. They were partly rewarded with school credits and partly forced to participate with gentle methods. Some were in a hurry, defining ethnicity by the origin of the family name or accepting the vernacular version of expressions like "God only knows" as an answer. Other census takers were worried that the answer "prostitute" from a group of women would be unacceptable. In the Far East, age had to be computed via the Chinese calendar, and some census wards had to be re-registered since the *narodnost'* or ethnicity "Sibiriak" was too general and unacceptable to the authorities [Hirsch, p. 96–99].

All the hardships of the early 20th century affected the population's size and structure, as shown by the 1920 and, more completely, the 1926 censuses. According to the 1897 census, the population of the Russian Empire stood at 125.6 million inhabitants, excepting the Grand Duchy of Finland. According to estimates based on vital registers, in 1911 the total population had increased to 167 million. If we include the areas not counted, the population of Soviet Russia in 1920 has been estimated at about 137 million. By then, the following countries were not included: Poland with 18 million, Finland with 3 million, Romania with 3 million, and the Baltic states with 5 million. Also, Karskaia oblast', with about 400,000 former Russian citizens,

had been transferred to Turkey according to the peace treaty between Soviet Russia and Turkey in 1921. Comparing the population pyramids based on the 1897 and 1926 censuses for the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union respectively, the changes in the composition of the population are striking (fig. 1, 2). In 1897, the ten-year age groups reveal a regularly decreasing

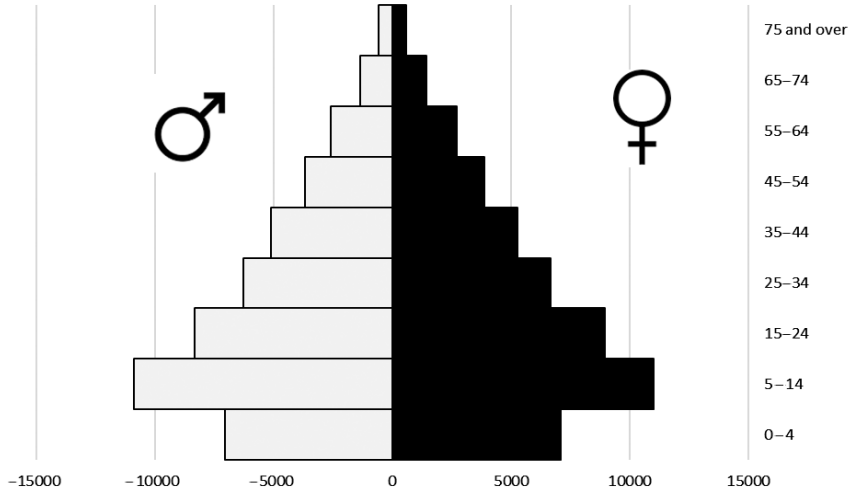

Fig. 1. Population of European Russia according to the 1897 census by age and sex (in thousands) [Mitchell]

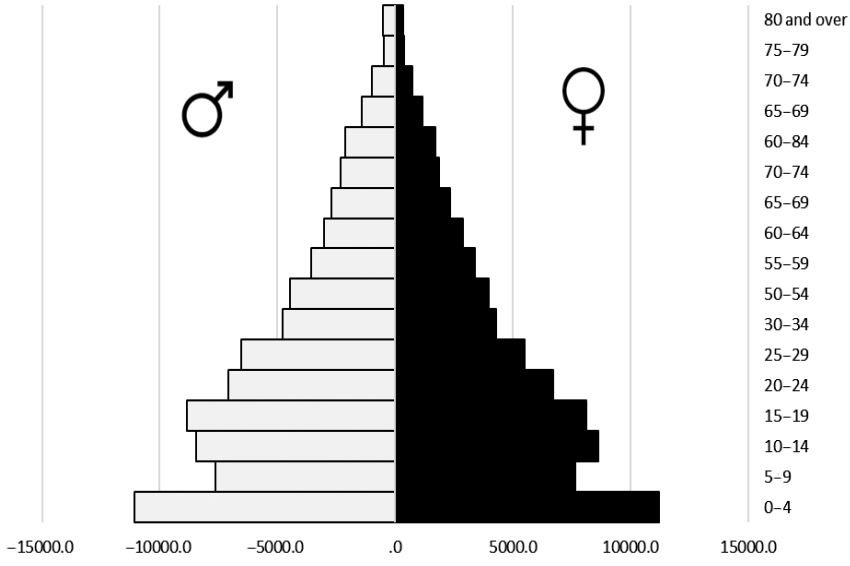

Fig. 2. Population of the Soviet Union according to the 1926 census by age and sex (in thousands) [Mitchell]

population in the older age groups due to mortality, while the youngest age band is smaller simply because it was aggregated as a five-year age group. The aggregates from 1926 are all from five-year age groups, and it is evident that the number of children aged five to nine and ten to fourteen had been reduced due to the hardships of war and revolution.

As an extension of the all-union 1926 census, the authorities made a special effort to collect detailed information about the multi-ethnic northern territories of the Soviet Union in the Polar census (*Pripolarnaia perepis'*). '*Northern*' in this context could mean quite far south: for instance, the Kamchatka peninsula extends nearly to fifty degrees latitude, but was included due to its interesting aboriginal populations. To all these remote areas, the census bureaucrats sent some of the best ethnologists and other scientists with what must be the most detailed census questionnaires ever used anywhere in the world. In contrast to what happened to most other primary census manuscripts from the Soviet Union or Russia, in many cases the regional archives have preserved the original Polar census forms. Researchers have been able to copy them and transcribe the contents into database formats some eight decades after the census.

In order to understand what an achievement it is that this unique material was collected and has survived, we shall look further into the case study of the Polar census taken in the Yamal Peninsular region. Four different expeditions explored this vast territory to the east of the northern Ural mountain chain, where most of the population was nomadic. The arctic conditions in the wilderness required the expeditions to adapt to the nomadic lifestyle of the populations they enumerated. The students Lebedev and Voznesenski, with the interpreter Zotov and under the leadership of Vladimirtcev, set out to cover the Yamal Peninsula on 28 November. A pack of wolves attacked them on the first day. Since they lost most of their sledge reindeer, they had to risk going to the Schuch'ya river trading post with a light sledge: they were not even carrying a tent. Wolf attacks also occurred during the Nadymo-Poluiskaya expedition south of the peninsula, allegedly because they could not buy poison to kill them from the foreign traders whose visits along the coast the authorities now outlawed. The expedition's leader, the Russian Ethnographical Museum scientist Raisa Mitusova, the ethnography student Natalia Kotovschikova, also from Leningrad, and the journalist Jurkevich from Sverdlovsk were joined by two interpreters who also functioned as pursers. Deep snow made their progress towards the distant settlements almost insuperable, and after a pneumonia incidence the leader could only register households at the closest trading posts. Such hardships among northern census takers had parallels in Canada, where a census taker who lost his way by Lake Manitoba allegedly only survived because he ate his horse [Hamilton, Inwood, p. 101].

The start of the expedition into the Tazovsk region was equally difficult due to health problems. One of the census takers, the exiled lawyer P. Brzhesinsky, was severely wounded when his blitz photography equipment exploded inadvertently. At that point, he and the other enumerator,

the local expert Vityazev (as well as the agronomist/statistician P. Jordanski), were already much delayed due to illness among the regional reindeer herds which transported them. The one with the fewest problems was the one-man expedition Grigorii Artejev, a local schoolteacher who knew the Zyryans and the Samoeds: he needed no interpreter and got their help with lodging, provisions, and transportation. Thus, he was the exception from the centralistic approach of the Bolshevik regime when employing census takers.

The expedition members brought enough provisions for one month in the field, including bread, meat, cereals, butter, tea, sugar, dried fruit, spices, cranberries (to prevent scurvy), soap, and a first-aid kit. Leonid Shul'ts, who headed the census operations, reported the need for more medical equipment to assist people in the remote settlements, since that made them more cooperative when answering the many census questions. It helped that the census takers could trade with the locals, exchanging staples for fresh food or buying fur clothes. To reduce under-enumeration, the organizers sent information about the census to the subjects on beforehand, and the expeditions had to follow a pre-designed itinerary. The polar census takers reported that most people were willing to specify their demography, household composition, migration, production, and consumption. The reindeer owners with big herds, however, constantly concealed the real number of animals, so the enumerators tried to check themselves [Glavatskaya].

Not only did the Polar census attempt to cover a huge territory, but it also aimed to collect information about all aspects of life in the villages and other settlements in the numerous types of questionnaires provided. The most central form was the nominative household card with 405 fields, listing all members of a household unit by name, age, family relationship, marital status, ethnicity, and income. A special card provided extra information about the head of the household, with last names, occupation, and address with name of the settlement and region. Production, consumption, and all equipment available in the household were detailed in the budget and economy cards. These detailed the different types of game and fish caught, including a simple time use study. On special trade cards, it was noted what the households sold and bought. In addition, the census takers reported more qualitative information about the settlements in their community diaries: they took pictures, drew many maps, and registered the types of commerce at trading posts [The 1926/27 Soviet polar census expeditions].

The general impression from the reports of the census takers in the Obdorsk region is rather pessimistic, and we can read it like a premonition of the kind of economic-demographic problems that became fatal for the leading Soviet census takers in 1937. In 1926, they could still blame problems on the Civil War and foreign intervention, but the reorganization of the trading system from big markets to smaller trading posts called "factories" may also have caused problems. Especially severe was the lack of foreign hunting equipment, such as traps, bullets, and strychnine poison to kill game and wolves. Although trade with foreigners along the Arctic coast now being illegal, in these vast territories contraband commerce was diffi-

cult to control. Because of the goods deficit, the wolf packs increased in size while the reindeer herds were diminished because people had to slaughter more animals in order to compensate for the lack of other foodstuffs.

Despite certain deficiencies, there is no doubt that the 1926 all-union census, together with the Polar census, was the most successful post-revolutionary enumeration ever performed. Unfortunately, the international isolation of the Soviet Union and rigid political centralization inside the country halted the revolutionary development of population studies. The events of the 1930s, especially the Moscow show trials, meant that the success of the 1926 All-Union census could not be followed up. The 1937 census manuscripts and aggregates were destroyed and the census directors were executed because the authorities found the results politically unacceptable [Жиромская, Киселев, Поляков]. The replacement, in the form of the 1939 census, gave results which are disputed and cannot be checked due to the destruction of the original census manuscripts. After the war, the Soviet Union prioritized tasks other than census taking, and only in 1959 was the next enumeration performed. Since then, the Soviet Union or Russia has taken a census in every decade.

* * *

Post-revolutionary periods are always volatile, making it difficult to perform many tasks involving the state and the whole population, such as taking censuses properly. In order to evaluate the enumerations organized in spite of war, unrest, economic difficulties and a deficient bureaucracy, we need to ask: when is a census, a census? [Goyer, Draaijer]. First, national legal authority is required, together with complete coverage of a well-defined enumeration area. This has been the case in the US since 1790. It was not possible in the Soviet Union in 1920, although the USSR reached these goals by 1926. In France, the terror and wars which started with the Revolution made coverage of the French nation with a census impossible before the turn of the century. Further census requirements are simultaneous and individual enumeration. In none of the cases was it possible to enumerate the whole population on the same census day. To what degree it was possible to mirror the situation on one specific day (thus including people who died and those who were born shortly after) is difficult to tell. Neither the first French nor the first US censuses were individual in the sense that they listed individuals in nominative census manuscripts; these censuses were numeric, as was usual until the mid-19th century. In addition to being nominative, the first Soviet censuses also met the requirement to publish statistical aggregates, while early US and French publications were scarce indeed.

In order for a census to be successful, further requirements need to be fulfilled. A census is a dialectical process involving the state and the population and requires reciprocal trust. If significant parts of the people are hostile to the enumeration and the census takers, it is difficult to get trust-

worthy results. The terror of the French Revolution created a bad climate for cooperation between the state and major population groups from the very start. The 1790 US census and the 1926 Soviet census were successful because they were accepted as enumerations organized for the people and supported by the people. In the US, there was enthusiasm for census taking as an instrument to make their new democracy work in opposition to previous British rule; the main slogan during the Revolutionary War had been "no taxation without representation". There was also mercantilist enthusiasm about increasing population numbers. Unlike similar post-revolutionary Soviet population claims in the 1930s, American calculations were built on enumerations rather than theoretical projections: thus, they were able to note that the US population overtook that of England and Wales by 1840 [Anderson, p. 21]. In the Soviet Union, there was enthusiasm about the building of the new workers' and farmers' state in the 1920s, an enthusiasm which sadly faded during the repressions of the 1930s, when trust was replaced by an atmosphere of mutual suspicion. The complete failure of the 1937 census also teaches a lesson to those who allege that censuses are constructions created by the state more or less independently [Curtis]. After Stalin and the party leaders realized that the results were incompatible with their preconceived ideas about population statistics, they saw no alternative but to destroy all census materials and execute or jail the census directors. Census taking suffered during the Moscow trials, just as it did during the Jacobin terror in France.

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